

264 *med* physicians and philosophers. I have repeatedly affirmed that the Abipones are vigorous, and long-lived, yet who can call them studious of diet? They eat when, as much, and as often as they like. They have no fixed hours for dinner or for supper, but if food be at hand will dine as soon as they wake. Hungry at all hours they eat at all hours; and an appetite will never be wanting if they have wherewith to exercise it upon. You would think that the more they devour the sooner they are hungry. They 147 are voracious, and, like the other Americans, 262 cram themselves with flesh, but without injury 484 to their health; for their stomachs, which will bear both a great quantity of food, and long abstinence from it, are weakened neither by gormandizing nor by extreme hunger. They undertake journies of many months unfurnished with any provision. A sufficiency of proper food is often not to be met with on the way, either from the want of an opportunity of hunting, or from the unintermitting haste with which the desire of surprizing, or necessity of flying the enemy obliges them to pursue their journey. Yet an empty belly and barking 147 stomach never do them any harm, nor even 262 prevent them from cheerfully conversing to still the sense of hunger. On such occasions you see them betray no sign of impatience, nor

222 to those that are in need. Under the earth,
 262 and even under the water, grow esculent roots.
 Two species of the alfaroba, commonly called
 St. John's bread, throughout great part of the
 year, produce extremely wholesome, and by no
 means unsavoury food, both meat and drink.
 000 See the munificence of God even towards those
 by whom he is not worshipped! Behold a rude
 image of the golden age! The Abipones have
 312 it in their power to procure all the appurte-
 271 nances of daily life, with little or no labour,
 and though unacquainted with money of every
 kind, are commodiously supplied with all
 necessaries; for if a long drought have exhaust-
 ed the rivers, they will find water even in the
 most desert plains, under the leaves of the
 caraquatà, or they can suck little apples, which
 [824] are full of a watery liquor like melons, and grow
 under the earth, or dig a well in the channel of
 a dried-up river, and see water sufficient for
 themselves and their horses spring up from
 thence. A Spaniard, in the wilds of America,
 will pine with thirst, either from being ignorant
 of these things, or impatient of the labour of
 obtaining them.
 361 As the supports of life are not all found col-
 481 lected together in one place, nor will suffice for
 a long time, or a great number of hordesmen, the
 Abipones are obliged to change their residence,
 AND TRAVEL ABOUT CONTINUALLY.

HISTORY OF THE ABIPONES.

113

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and travel about continually. Neither rugged roads, nor distances of places, prevent them from a journey; for both men and women travel on horses which are swift and numerous there, and if they are in haste, traverse vast tracts of land every day. I shall now describe the equipment of the horse, and the method of riding. The bit which they use is composed of a cow's horn fastened on each side to four little pieces of wood placed transversely, and to a double thong which supplies the place of a bridle. Some use iron bits, of which they are very proud. The major part have saddles like English ones, of a raw bull's hide stuffed with reeds. Stirrups are not in general use. The men leap on to their horse on the right side. With the right hand they grasp the bridle, with the left a very long spear, leaning upon which they jump up with the impulse of both feet, and then fall right upon the horse's back. The same expedition in dismounting, which would excite the admiration of a European, is very useful to them in skirmishes. They use no spurs even at this day. For a whip, they make use of four strips of a bull's hide twisted together, with which they stimulate new or refractory horses to the course, not by the souse of pain, but by the fear excited by the cracking of the whip. The

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[232]

[177]

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492 The
 [237] saddles used by the women are the same as
 those of the men, except that the former, more
 studious of external elegance, have theirs
 made of the skin of a white cow. When
 an Abiponian woman wants to mount her horse,
 she throws herself up to the middle upon its
 neck, like men in Europe, and then separating
 her feet on both sides, places herself in the
 saddle, which has no cushion; nor does the
 hardness of it offend her in journeys of many
 [42] days; from which you may perceive that the
 skin of the Abipones is harder than leather,
 being rendered callous by their constantly
 riding without a cushion. Indians who ride
 much and long without saddles, frequently hurt
 and wound the horse's back, without receiving
 484 any injury themselves. I will now describe
 792 their manner of travelling when they remove
 from one place to another. The wife, besides
 [482] her husband's bow and quiver, carries all the
 domestic furniture, all the pots, gourds, jugs,
 shells, balls of woollen and linen thread, wea-
 ving instruments, &c. These things are con-
 [854] tained in boar-skin bags, suspended here and
 there from the saddle; where she also places
 the whelps, and her young infant if she have
 one. Besides these things, she suspends from
 the sides of the saddle a large mat, with two
 [501] poles, to fix a tent wherever they like, and a
 bull's hide to serve for a boat in crossing rivers.

HISTORY OF THE ABIPONES.

115

No woman will set out on a journey without a stake like a palm branch, broad at each side and slender in the middle, made of very hard wood, and about two ells long, which serves admirably for digging eatable roots, knocking down fruits from trees, and dry boughs for lighting a fire, and even for breaking the heads and arms of enemies, if they meet any by the way. With this luggage, which you would think a camel could hardly carry, are the women's horses loaded in every journey. But this is not all. You often see two or three women or girls seated on one horse: not from any scarcity of beasts, all having plenty, but because they are sworn enemies to solitude and silence. As few horses will bear more than one rider, unless accustomed to it, they immediately throw the female trio, but generally without doing them any injury, except that these Amazons, when seen sprawling like snails upon the ground, excite the mirth of the spectators, and amidst mutual laughter, try to scramble again on to the rustic steed, as often as they are thrown off.

The company of women is attended by a vast number of dogs. As soon as they are mounted, they all look round, and if one be missing out of the many which they keep, begin to call him with their usual *nè nè nè*, repeated as loud as possible a hundred times, till at last they see them all assembled.

231 in a country where beasts are frequently distressed both with the burning heat of heaven, and with long thirst, for want of water, which is not to be got for many leagues. But let us now take leave of the female riders, and of the dogs that accompany them, and direct our attention to the Abipones, their husbands.

484 The luggage being all committed to the women, the Abipones travel armed with a spear alone, that they may be disengaged to 224 fight or hunt, if occasion require. If they spy 484 any emus, deer, stags, boars, or other wild animals, they pursue them with swift horses, and kill them with a spear. If they can meet with nothing fit to kill and eat, they set fire to the plain which is covered with tall dry grass, and force the animals, concealed underneath, to leap out by crowds, and in flying from the fire to fall into the cruel hands of the Indians, who [252] kill them with wood, iron, or a string, and afterwards roast them. Should every thing else be wanting, the plains abound in rabbits, to afford a breakfast, dinner, or supper. To 372 strike fire, they have no occasion for either 484 flint or steel, the place of which is supplied by pieces of wood, about a span long, one of which is soft, the other hard. The first, which is a little pierced in the middle, is placed underneath; the harder wood, which has a point

HISTORY OF THE ABIPONES.

119

like an acorn, is applied to the bole of the softer, and whirled quickly round with both hands. By this mutual and quick attrition of both woods, a little dust is rubbed off which at the same moment catches fire and emits smoke; to this the Indians apply straw, cow-dung, dry leaves, &c. for fuel. The soft wood used for this purpose is taken either from the tree *ambay*, from the shrub *caraquatà*, or from the cedar; but the harder, which they whirl round with the hand, comes from the tree *tatayi*, which affords a saffron-coloured wood, as hard as box, and fit for dying clothes yellow, together with mulberries very like those of our own country.

Whenever they think fit to sleep at noon, or pass the night by the way, they anxiously look out for some place affording an opportunity of water, wood, and pasture. If there arise any suspicion of a hostile ambuscade, they hide themselves in lurking holes, rendered inaccessible by the nature of the place. You would say that they and their families are at home, wherever they go, for they carry about mats to serve for a house, as a snail does its shell. Two poles are fixed into the ground, and to them is tied a mat, twice or thrice folded to exclude the wind and rain. That the ground upon which they lie may not be wetted by a heavy shower, they providently dig a little channel at the side

342 of their tent, that the waters may flow off, and
 484 be carried elsewhere. They generally send a
 tame mare with a bell about her neck to a drove
 231 of horses, when they are sent to pasture; for
 484 they will never go out of sight of her, and if
 dispersed up and down the plain, through fear
 of a tiger, return to her as to their mother; on
 which account the Spaniards call this mare *la*
madrina, and the Abipones, *latè*, which means a
 mother. For the same reason, on a few of the
 horses they place shackles of soft leather, that
 they may crop the grass without wandering far
 from the tent, and be at hand, if it be found ne-
 cessary to travel in the night. Not only the
 484 men, but even very young women cross rivers
 484 without ford, bridge, or boat, by swimming.
 The children, the saddles, and other luggage
 484 are sent over on a bull's hide, called by the
 501 Abipones, *ñataè*, and by the Spaniards, *la*
pelota, and generally made use of in crossing
 the smaller rivers. I will describe the rude
 structure of it. A hairy, raw, and entirely un-
 [28] dressed hide is made almost square, by having
 the extremities of the feet and neck cut off.
 The four sides are raised like a hat, to the
 height of about two spans, and each is tied with
 a thong, that they may remain erect, and pre-
 serve their squareness of form. At the bottom
 of the *pelota*, the saddles and other luggage are

HISTORY OF THE ABIPONES.

121

thrown by way of ballast, in the midst of which ⁴⁸⁴ the person that is to cross the river, sits, taking ⁵⁰¹ care to preserve his balance. Into a hole in the side of the pelota, they insert a thong instead of a rope, which a person, swimming, lays hold of with his teeth and with one hand, whilst he uses the other for an oar, and thus gently draws the pelota along the river, without shaking or endangering the person within in the least, though a high wind may have greatly agitated the waves. If the coldness of the water cramps the man that drags the pelota, so that he is disenabled from swimming, and would otherwise be drowned, he will be carried safely along with the pelota to the opposite bank, by the force of the waves. If rivers of a ^[492] wider channel and a more rapid stream are to be crossed, the swimmer holds the tail of the horse, which swims before, with one hand, to support himself, and drags the pelota with the other. In so many and such long journies, I practised this sort of navigation almost daily, and not unfrequently repeated it often on the same day. At first it appeared very formidable and dangerous to me. But instructed by frequent practice, I have often laughed at myself and my imaginary danger, and always preferred a hide in crossing a river, to a tottering skiff or boat, which is constantly liable to be

484 overturned. If many days' rain has wetted the
 501 hide, and made it as soft as linen, boughs of
 trees are placed under the four sides, and the
 bottom of the pelota, which supports the hide,
 and strengthens it to cross the river in safety.
 American captains of Spanish soldiers will not
 swim, although they know how, that they may
 not be obliged to strip before their men. To
 reach, therefore, the opposite shore, they sit
 upon a pelota, which, scorning the assistance
 of another person, they impel forwards by two
 forked boughs for oars.

481 The Abipones enter even the larger rivers on
 484 horseback: but when the ford begins to fail,
 482 they leap from their horse into the water. With
 their right hand they hold the reins of the horse,
 and row with the same; in their left they
 grasp a very wide spear, at the end of which
 they suspend their clothes in the air, that they
 may not be wetted. Every now and then they
 give the horse a blow, if he suffers himself to be
 carried down with the stream, to bring him back
 to the right course, and make him strain to the
 appointed part of the opposite shore, which
 should be neither marshy nor weedy, nor of a
 very high bank, so that it may afford an easy
 ascent. It was laughable to see the crowds of
 481 savages swimming at my side, with nothing but
 484 their heads above water, yet conversing as plea-

HISTORY OF THE ABIPONES.

123

santly as others would on the green turf. How often have I crossed those tremendous rivers sitting on a hide in the midst of them! You would have called them so many Neptunes, so familiar were they with the water. Their boldness exceeds the belief of Europeans. Whenever they had a mind to go from St. Ferdinand to Corrientes, they swam across that vast sea, which is composed of the united streams of the great Paraguay and the great Parana, with their horses swimming beside them, to the great astonishment of the Spaniards: for in this part the river is formidable to ships even, from its width, depth, and incredible rapidity, and often filled myself and my companions with terror when we sailed upon it, whilst I resided in that colony. Formerly those savage plunderers, whenever they hastened home with a great number of beasts taken from the Spaniards, prudently crossed this immense river towards the South, going from island to island; by which means they had time to recruit themselves and their beasts, after the fatigue of swimming, in each of the islands. It will be worth while to describe the manner in which many thousands of horses, mules, and oxen, are sent across great rivers to the opposite shore. The herd of beasts is not all driven by one person, but divided into companies, each of

231 which is inclosed behind and on both sides, by
● 484 men on horseback, to keep them from running
away: to prevent which, some erect two
hedges, wider at the beginning, and narrower
at the shore itself, through which the beasts are
driven, so that more than two or three cannot
enter the river at a time. The tame oxen and
horses are sent first into the water, and the
wild ones follow without delay. Great care
must be taken, that they be not deprived of the
power of swimming, by being too much
crowded. Behind and on both sides the beasts
are watched by Indians, either swimming, or
conveyed in a little bark, that they may make
straight for the opposite shore: for when left
alone, they suffer themselves to be carried
down by the stream, and float to those places
which forbid all access, on account of the high
banks, marshes, or trees, by which they are
impeded. If an ox or a horse be whirled round
in swimming, it will be sucked up by the water,
unable to exert itself any longer. To prevent
this, the Abipones, even in the midst of the
river, mount those oxen, that are either sluggish
or refractory, and taking hold of their horns
with both hands, sit upon their backs, striking
v their sides with both feet, till, in spite of them-
selves, they are guided to the opposite shore.
When arrived at land, fear gives way to rage,

HISTORY OF THE ABIPONES.

125

and they attack every thing that comes in their way, with their threatening horns. You will hardly believe that I always found fierce bulls less dexterous in crossing rivers, than cows, which, on account of the greater timidity of their nature, are more obedient to the driver, and strain more eagerly to the shore. Oxen tied by the horns to a tolerably large boat often swim across in perfect security: for as the heads of the animals are suspended on each side the boat, their bodies scarcely find any difficulty in swimming. In this manner I sent twenty oxen at a time from the estate, to the colony of the Rosary, across the river Paraguay. More or fewer oxen may be tied to the bark, according to the size of it. Sometimes the herd of beasts is surrounded by long barks or skiffs on every side, lest, when weary of swimming, they should float down with the stream, and wander from that part of the shore that had been fixed on for their ascent. But the Abipones, not needing these precautions of the Spaniards, could successfully transport crowds of swimming oxen across any rivers, themselves swimming beside them. This expertness of the Abipones in swimming across rivers, I have long desired to see in European armies, which are often prevented from attacking the enemy, by the intervention of some

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291 respectable appearance. When they are hew-
 [313] ing down a tree, and are afraid of being fatigued,
 they will sometimes throw off their clothes, if
 they be out of sight. Some strip themselves
 [726] quite naked when they are going to join battle
 [703] with the savages, partly that, being lighter, they
 may be so much the more expeditious in avoid-
 ing their adversaries' weapons, partly, that they
 may appear to despise wounds. In long jour-
 [404] nies, they generally go bareheaded amidst rain,
 heat, and wind. Some, however, tie a piece of
 red woollen cloth round their forehead, which
 is a great defence against the heat of the sun
 [177] and pains in the head. They greatly prize a
 European hat, especially the young men, who
 likewise are much delighted with Spanish
 saddles, with spurs, and iron bridles. The wo-
 men wear the same dress as the men, adjusted
 in rather a different manner.

1462 The clothing of the Abipones is the chief em-
 286 ployment of the women, who are commendable
 for their assiduity, and almost avidity in labour:
 for not to mention the daily business of the
 [386] house, they shear sheep, spin the wool very
 neatly, dye it beautifully, by the aid of alum,
 with any colours they may have at hand, and
 afterwards weave it into cloth, adorned with a
 great number of lines and figures, and with a
 variety of colours. You would take it for a

HISTORY OF THE ABIPONES.

139

Some time after my arrival, I played on the flute in the open street. The crowd of women were delighted with the sweetness of a musical instrument they had never before seen; and the youths flocked in numbers to hear it: but as soon as they approached, the women every one disappeared. The custom of bathing in a⁵¹⁵ neighbouring stream is agreeable to them, and⁸³⁴ practised every day, except when the air is too cold. But do not imagine that, as syrens and dolphins are seen sporting on the same waves in the ocean, males and females swim and wash in the same part of the lake, or river. According to the Abiponian custom, the different sexes have different places assigned them. Where the women bathe, you cannot find the shadow of a man. Above a hundred women often go out²²² to distant plains together to collect various⁴⁸⁴ fruits, roots, colours, and other useful things, and remain four or eight days in the country, without having any male to accompany them on their journey, assist them in their labours, take care of the horses, or guard them amidst the perils of wild beasts, or of enemies. Those Amazons are sufficient to themselves, and think they are safer alone. I never heard of a single woman being torn to pieces by a tiger, or bitten by a serpent: but I knew many men who were killed in both ways.

HISTORY OF THE ABIPONES.

149

unknown to the Abipones, and quite unnecessary to them. Boys and girls not unfrequently pilfered melons grown in our gardens, and chickens reared in our houses, but in them the theft was excusable; for they falsely imagined that these things were free to all, or might be taken not much against the will of the owner. Though I have enlarged on the native virtues of the Abipones more than it was my intention to do, I shall think nothing has been said till I have made a few observations relative to their endurance of labour. Who can describe the constant fatigues of war and hunting which they undergo? When they make an excursion against the enemy, they often spend two or three months in an arduous journey of above three hundred leagues through desert wilds. They swim across vast rivers, and long lakes more dangerous than rivers. They traverse plains of great extent, destitute both of wood and water. They sit for whole days on saddles scarce softer than wood, without having their feet supported by a stirrup. Their hands always bear the weight of a very long spear. They generally ride trotting horses, which miserably shake the rider's bones by their jerking pace. They go bare-headed amidst burning sun, profuse rain, clouds

147 of dust, and hurricanes of wind. They gene-
 484 rally cover their bodies with woollen garments,
 726 which fit close to the skin; but if the extreme
 heat obliges them to throw these off as far as
 the middle, their breasts, shoulders, and arms
 are cruelly bitten and covered with blood by
 swarms of flies, gad-flies, gnats, and wasps.
 [224] As they always set out upon their journeys
 unfurnished with provisions, they are obliged
 to be constantly on the look out for wild ani-
 mals, which they may pursue, kill, and convert
 [415] into a remedy for their hunger. As they have
 no cups they pass the night by the side of
 rivers or lakes, out of which they drink like
 dogs. But this opportunity of getting water
 is dearly purchased; for moist places are not
 only seminaries of gnats and serpents, but like-
 wise the haunts of dangerous wild beasts,
 which threaten them with sleepless nights and
 [513] peril of their lives. They sleep upon the hard
 ground, either starved with cold, or parched
 with heat, and if overtaken by a storm, often lie
 awake, soaking in water the whole night.
 When they perform the office of scouts, they
 frequently have to creep on their hands and
 feet over trackless woods, and through forests,
 to avoid discovery; passing days and nights
 without sleep or food. This also was the case
 when they were long pursued by the enemy,
 And forced to hasten their flight.

726 of darkness, and incur less risk of detection: on their return, if they are obliged to make it in haste, they wish that luminary to be on the increase. They generally begin a journey about mid-day, and in different companies, meeting together in the evening at some appointed place.

721 A European prince, when about to engage in a war, wants more than lead and iron: he stands in need of gold and silver wherewith to procure provisions, and pay his troops. The chieftain of the Abipones has no care of this kind: every one of his soldiers is furnished with plenty of horses, a formidable spear, a bow, and a bundle of arrows. These are their only instruments of war. The severed heads of the Spaniards, thousands of horses and mules taken from their estates, children torn from their mothers' bosoms, and the glory derived from these, serve both for the rewards and trophies of the fighting Abipones. Though the colony which they purpose to attack be more than two hundred leagues distant, they each drive but two horses before them, and ride upon a third. They do not judge it expedient to begin a journey laden with provisions. They carry nothing either for meat or drink. Formerly they are said to have had roasted rabbits for provisions, but that was when they were less exercised in hunting, being unprovided with horses. Now the Abipones

HISTORY OF THE ABIPONES.

371

484 ●

NOW THE ABIPONES

kill any animal they meet for food, with the spear they carry in their hands. That each may hunt more expeditiously, and obtain more booty, they separate their ranks, unless suspicious of the enemy's being close upon them, and disperse themselves over the plain, afterwards assembling to pass the night or mid-day together. For they know what situations afford the best opportunities of getting wood and water, and where they may safely lurk without fear of secret hostilities.

They think gourds and horns, which are used for flaggons and drinking-cups in Paraguay, a superfluous burden; for they can either take up water in the hollow of their hands, or stoop, and drink it like dogs. Pools and deep rivers are often at hand, but their salt and bitter waters are fitter to torture the stomach, than quench the thirst. They consider an iron knife, and a pebble to sharpen it, necessary instruments on a journey; as also two sticks, by the mutual attrition of which they can elicit fire even while sitting on horseback. Of these trifles consists the whole furniture of the Abipones, happy in being able to dispense with all that luggage and those waggons which in Europe are justly called the impediments of the army, and leeches of the treasury. Our Abipones pass the day and night in the open air, and are either parched

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415][412
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726 with heat, or drenched with rain of many days'
 484 continuance. They expose their bare heads to
 the burning sun; they strip their shoulders,
 breasts, and arms of the garment of sheep's or
 otters' skins, and had rather endure the stings
 of gnats, than the perspiration caused by the
 fervid heat of the air. A turf is their bed at
 night, a saddle their pillow, and the sky their
 [701] covering. Every one waits upon himself, nor
 does the leader employ any one else to prepare
 his food, or saddle his horse. If they have to
 cross wide rivers or vast lakes, they need neither
 [481] bridge nor boat. When it is no longer fordable
 they leap from their horses into the water, strip
 themselves, hold up their clothes at the end of
 their spear in the left hand, and using the right,
 with which they grasp the reins of their horse,
 for an oar, struggle to the opposite bank.

In the commencement of a journey they daily
 send out scouts in all directions, who, if they
 discover any traces of a foreign nation or any
 mark of hostile designs, immediately announce
 it to their fellow-soldiers. They generally choose
 a situation to pass the night in, which, being
 guarded behind, and on both sides by a lake,
 river, or thick wood, renders access difficult;
 where they cannot be surrounded on a sudden;
 and where a few can repel or elude the attacks
 of a great many. They lie down in a semicir-

HISTORY OF THE ABIPONES.

373

ular form. Each has his spear fixed at his
 head, and four or five keep up a fire burning in
 the midst, unless fear of the enemy obliges them
 to refrain from this comfort, lest the blaze or
 the smoke should betray them: though on
 some occasions, it was of use to multiply fires,
 in order to deceive the enemy; for from the
 number of them the number of men passing the
 night thereabout is usually argued. By this
 artifice Cortez is said to have imposed upon the
 Mexicans. Whilst some are indulging in sleep,
 others, appointed to keep watch, scour the plain
 on horseback, both for the purpose of bringing
 back the scattered horses, and, on the approach
 of danger of admonishing their sleepy comrades
 by sound of trumpet. I have been astonished
 to see with what activity and fidelity they per-
 formed all the offices of watchmen in our colo-
 nies. Whole nights have they spent in riding
 up and down the plains adjacent to the town,
 even in very boisterous weather, whenever the
 slightest rumours were spread of the approach
 of the enemy. By the nightly sound of horns
 and trumpets they signified that they were on
 the alert, and, by showing the enemy that their
 intentions were discovered, prevented them
 from making the attack: for it is usual with
 the savages never to attempt any thing except
 against the unprepared. During the whole

374

HISTORY OF THE ABIPONES.

726 seven years that I spent amongst the Abi-
434 pones, I regularly found that whenever we
passed sleepless nights in arms, for fear of an
enemy, not so much as the shadow of one ever
approached; and that when none of us suspected
any thing hostile, a formidable swarm of savages
fell upon our colony. An enemy is never more
to be dreaded than when he is feared the
least.
